

spirit and teaching of that article, in our bill of rights, which, framed in the days of seventy-six, and looking eminently to the "security of liberty" and "the foundation of government," advised, in express terms, both the freedom and *frequency* of elections. No one could be more anxious than himself, to infuse into every department of the government, the genuine essence of pure democracy and perfect equality. No one recurred to the wisdom of our revolutionary fathers, with more unfeigned reverence and entire respect. But why, sir, should so much stress be laid upon the term frequent? It was not a word of isolated, definite and precise meaning; but relative and comparative in its character, and evidently designed to receive such liberal and rational interpretation as the circumstances and necessities of the times seemed to demand. It was inserted in the great charter of our rights, as a wise and noble precept, and not as a rigid and unbending rule, which despite of every change, was to tie all future generations down to one uncompromising line of action. The same process of reasoning that proved that annual sessions were nearer to the meaning and design of the principle taught by the article, than the biennial policy, would apply with equal force, to the adoption of semi-annual sessions; and the argument might be continued until it became apparent to every one, that the attempt to give to the term "frequent," any strict meaning, differing from that which the reason of the times justified, was utterly and perfectly absurd.

The example of annual sessions, we are told, had been established by the earliest founders of the government. But what was their situation? The government itself was in a sort of half chrysalis state—just emerging from the colonial position. The havoc of war was desolating the whole country, and filling it with alarm and terror. Civil discord and intestine commotion agitated every section within our borders; and our very liberties themselves were struggling for that triumph, which was only secured after long years of peril and strife. Surely if ever there was a time when the wisdom, and virtue, and experience of the land should be frequently assembled, it was in that dark and dangerous hour. Then, if ever, wise counselings were demanded—then, in short, the crisis of the times were above all other considerations, and reason and propriety alike dictated the construction and the action taken by our sires. That fearful period had forever passed away, and with the exception of the political excitement, common to our form of government, our good old State was now moving with peace, plenty, and power, in her onward destiny. With the change of events, the reasons for annual sessions had vanished away, and no one could entertain a doubt, but that the highest dictates of economy, imperatively called for the adoption of a policy warranted by the circumstances of the times, and in direct accordance with the popular demand. Gentlemen had further urged, in argument, that the biennial act had been proposed at a time peculiar in our affairs, and engrafted amid the provisions of the Constitution, purely as a measure of saving and

economy; and they had then pointed with honest pride to the well-filled coffers of a surplus treasury, as fully justifying them in seeking to return to that policy of which their judgments approved. It was indeed a glorious truth, that Maryland had emerged in full splendor, from the obscurity that once threatened to cloud her fair fame; and now possessed of an untarnished escutcheon, she stood with noble presence amid the sister sovereigns around her. Under the guidance of a master-hand and courageous heart, a mighty system of revenue had been breathed into full life and action; and the demon of repudiation rebuked and abashed, was made to slink away from our domain forever. The change was great and happy—one worthy of imitation—one worthy of all remembrance. But even in the full tide of prosperity, we should not conceal from ourselves the stern and stubborn fact, that a patriotic people were still toiling manfully under the burthen of millions. The tax collector was wandering in every section of the land, gathering in the hard earned and yet cheerfully paid gold, that the honor of our State might remain unsullied without blemish and without stain. Not a fraction of the taxes had been removed, and every reason of economy that had originated the measure of reform and relief, still remained in full force and vigor. Aye, the very gallantry itself, with which the whole community, as one man, had come to the rescue, furnished additional and powerful motives for making the most strenuous effort to lighten, quickly and effectually, the load so nobly borne. He wished to see the mighty incubus of debt, that was now depressing and weighing down the energies of men, pass speedily off, and he should cheerfully, eagerly aid in every and all reforms consistent with propriety, which would directly or remotely assist in accomplishing this great and paramount result. With him, reform implied economy as well as convenience; and whatever might be the vote he was called upon to give, he should never depart from that principle.

Of the amendment which had just emanated from the honorable gentleman from Queen Anne's (Mr. Spencer,) after the remarks he had already had the honor to submit to the Convention, it was unnecessary for him to speak or notice, by any other than the briefest comment. Its object and design, as expressed directly upon its face, was to give to the Legislature, hereafter to be assembled, "the right to provide, by law, for annual election of delegates to the General Assembly, and for annual sessions of the Legislature, which shall not continue in session longer than fifty days." It appeared only to differ from other propositions, by shifting the responsibility from ourselves to the Legislature that might follow. It was equally at war with the direct mandate of the sovereign power, and equally liable to all the difficulties and objections previously urged. We are, or should be, as capable of making the decision, as those who are to come after us, and should not, by a mere change of the tribunal, seek to avoid the judgment which we had been emphatically ordered to give. Much had been said in this discussion, and by gentlemen who had